



## July “Nutrition Connection”: Summer Slim Down with Fruits and Vegetables

With soaring summer temperatures, you may find that fresh fruits and vegetables are calling your name! These healthy cravings just make sense as most produce contains over 90% percent water, making it a nutritious way to hydrate. A plate filled with colorful fruits and vegetables guarantees not only a bounty of health-protecting nutrients, but can also be a great strategy to lose weight! Fruits and vegetables are categorized as **low-energy dense foods**. Low-energy dense foods can be eaten in larger portions; however, don’t add up to a large amount of calories. **High-energy dense** foods would be foods such as bacon, cookies, and butter. See the category descriptions below:

<b>High Energy Dense Foods:</b>	<b>4-9 calories per gram</b> (cookies, crackers, bacon, butter)
<b>Medium Energy Dense Foods:</b>	<b>1.5-4 calories per gram</b> (bagels, dried fruit, hummus, skim cheese)
<b>Low Energy Dense Foods:</b>	<b>0-1.5 calories per gram</b> (most fresh fruits and vegetables, fat-free yogurt, broth-based soups)

For those seeking weight loss, sticking to low-calorie diets can be difficult, especially if you don’t feel full or satisfied after eating. Research shows that one of the most important factors to helping us feel full is the **volume or amount** of food we eat. Low energy dense foods, such as fruits and vegetables, allow us to fill up our plates, but not our waistlines.

Check out the tips below for making the most of summer produce for your weight maintenance or weight loss plan.

- **FREEZE IT** Sometimes we buy too much! Don't leave ripe produce for the fruit flies. Freeze brown bananas for smoothies. Add frozen berries to your morning breakfast cereal. Savor frozen grapes for an after dinner healthy "bonbon." For a summer entertainment idea, blend watermelon and fresh mint, and freeze in ice trays. Add the tasty cubes to spark up a summer drink.
- **BLEND IT** Smoothies are the perfect way to enjoy a variety of produce in one glass, and you can find a galore of recipes on the web. Make sure to review the calories per serving to budget your blended beverage calories. Check out this [STL MOMS](#) interview for three simple smoothie ideas.

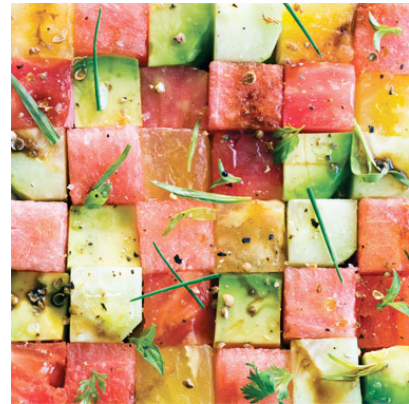
Blended cold soups are the perfect way to cool the palate. [Gazpacho](#), a cold tomato soup can be prepared in minutes, and is a great way to use up tomatoes that are one day from going out the door!

- **BOIL IT** Frozen vegetables can be just as healthy as fresh. For a quick dinner idea, add frozen vegetables to boiling pasta water two to three minutes before draining the pasta. Blanch the veggies in the pasta water for a couple of minutes, drain, and add sauce. A bowl with half veggies/half pasta will fill you up on less calories than if you ate the pasta alone.
- **LEAVE IT** Be. Summer fruits and vegetables may just need simple enhancers such oil, vinegar, salt & pepper to enjoy their natural goodness. The **Tomato and Watermelon Salad** below is a perfect example.

# Tomato And Watermelon Salad

Epicurious | March 2009

by Gerald Hirigoyen with Lisa Weiss



## Ingredients

- 3 or 4 small to medium heirloom/regular tomatoes, in assorted colors, cored and cut into 3/4-inch chunks
- 1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 cup 3/4-inch-cubed yellow or red seedless watermelon flesh
- 1 avocado, halved, pitted, peeled, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon chopped mixed fresh herbs, in any combination: basil, tarragon, chives, and cilantro
- 1/4 teaspoon coriander seed
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

## Directions

In a bowl, combine the tomatoes, cucumber, watermelon, avocado, and herbs.

In a spice grinder, grind the coriander seeds to a fine powder. Add the ground coriander to the tomato mixture and toss gently.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste.

**If you follow these guidelines your everyday foods will be much improved!**  
**For more information regarding eating healthy and other nutrition topics, please**  
**contact: Jennifer McDaniel, MS, RD, CSSD, LD**

[mcdanielnutrition@gmail.com](mailto:mcdanielnutrition@gmail.com)